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TWO BIRTH PLATES OF BUDDHA

In 1895 Dr. Führer found a copy of the original inscription in Tarāi region of Nepal without the mention of the name of the scribe and the date of the inscription which was usually not a common practice in scribing. Although there was no such village as Kapilavastu or Lumbini in Tarāi, he propagated this place as the birth place of Buddha. People gradually believed in it and only a few scholars like Mr. A. Cunningham, historian V.A. Smith, E.J. Thomas etc. doubted this discovery. Mr. Cunningham in his 'Ancient geography of India' wrote, — «The place where from the Tarāi inscription had been discovered is not at all related to the name Kapilavastu, or even Kapila»¹. Similarly the historian Dr. Smith assents that the place of the discovery of Tarāi inscription was never called Rumindei, it was a forged name given to it by Dr. Führer².

However, 33 years after the discovery of Tarāi inscription the Kapilesvar inscription was discovered in March 1928. In 1929 a reputed research journal Indian Historical Quarterly presented the details of the accidental discovery of this inscription³: — «The Kapilesvar inscription first brought to the public notice by Mr. Haren Chandra

1. A. CUNNINGHAM, *Ancient Geography of India*, London, 1871, p. 349.

2. V.A. SMITH, *Aśoka the Buddhist emperor of India*, Oxford, 1901, foot note No. 18, E.J. THOMAS, *The life of Buddha as legend and history* p. 18, A.A. FÜHRER, *Monograph on Buddha Sākyamuni's birth place in Nepalese Tarāi*, Allahabad, 1897, p. 28.

3. IHQ vol. V, pp. 728-753.

Chakaldar of Calcutta University was procured about March 1928 by Mr. Birendra Nath Roy for his museum at Puri from a farmer of the village of Kapileswar situated nearly a mile away to the south of the famous Lingaraj Temple at Bhubaneswar. The farmer had found the inscribed broken stone slab set in the mud wall of his hut». Seeing that it is an inscription Mr. Roy collected it for his museum. Dr. H.K. Mahatab, Ex-Governor of Bombay wrote in his first edition of History of Orissa ⁴ about this inscription. He says, «A contractor named Birendra Nath Roy had established a museum at Puri in 1928 and placed many statues, images, and stone inscriptions there collecting them from Bhubaneswar and adjacent areas of Cuttack. But later on these articles of Museum were sold to the Ashutosh museum of Calcutta».

The Kapileswar inscription:

Lenght: 1 foot 7 inches.
 Breadth: 1 foot.
 Thickness: 7 inches.

This inscription is a component portion of an Aśokan Pillar constructed by King Aśoka after Kalinga war. After the pillar is broken in the religious conflict a portion of it has been used as a Śivaliṅga in the Bhaskareswar Śiva temple of Bhubaneswar ⁵. This Śiva *liṅga* is very unusual in its size, having 9 feet in its length, 12 ft. one inch in its circumference with a diametre 3 ft. 10 inches. Its bell capital is lying in Orissa state museum. The lion figure was found at a distance of 40 ft. from the northern entrance of Bhaskareswar temple ⁶.

This inscription contains as a whole six lines as follows:

1. *Devānapiena piyadasina lājina vi.*
(Devānām priyeṇa priyadarśinā rājñā vim)

4. H.K. MAHATAB, *The History of Orissa*, Luchnow Univ. [1949], p. 324.

5. R.L. MITRA, *The Antiquities of Orissa*, Calcutta, 1980, vol. II, p. 89.

6. N.K. SAHU, *Buddhism in Orissa*, Utkal University, 1958, p. 30, K.C. PANIGRAHI, *Orissa and her remains*, p. 325.

2. *Sati bhisitena āgāca mahīda budhe jāte.*
(*Satyabhiṣikṭena āgatya mahitaṃ buddhaḥ jātaḥ*)
3. *Sakyamunīti silā bigaḍabhicā kālāpi*
(*Śākyamuniḥ iti silābikṛtabhittā kāri*)
4. *Ta silā thaṃbhe ba usapāpite hida bhagavaṃ.*
(*Tā silā stambhaḥ eva utsarpitaḥ, iha bhagavan*)
5. *Jateti lumini gāme uvalike kaṭe ilaṃ.*
(*Jataḥ iti lumbini grāmaḥ udvalikaḥ kṛtaḥ iḷa*)
6. *Buthe 20040 athabhāgiye ca yandra cu*
(*Byuṣṭe 240 aṣṭabhāgiḥ ca cundrayaḥ*)

The meaning of this Aśokan inscription runs thus:

«In twentieth year of his coronation Priyadarśī, the beloved of gods, offered his worship here as Buddha, the Śākyamuni was born in this place. Then he disfigured the stone or engraved the inscription in the stone. Then he erected the stone pillar».

«As Lord Buddha was born here, he exempted the Lumbini village from the payment of tax. Ubalika = Udvalika, *Ud* means to give up and *vali* means tax. He did it in the *iḷa*, worshipful 240 Abda'-Buddhist era. Prior to it 1/8th taxation was in vogue. Cundraya – the script writer».

Thus it is a complete inscription with the mentions of the Buddhist era and the name of the scribe, whereas the other one found in Tarāi seems to be incomplete and lacking in the above mentioned aspects. During religious conflict when the Buddhist monuments were demolished in the plain area of the country, the copy of the inscription might have been hidden in Tarāi forest which was inaccessible at large. While copying, the scribe might have missed some words thinking them as superfluous. Therefore the name of the scribe and the Buddhist era has been dropped in Tarāi Inscription. Now let's have a look to that inscription.

The Tarāi inscription:

The Tārai inscription ⁷ contains four and half lines.

1. *Devāna Piyena Piyadasinā lājina-bisati-basā bhisitena.*
(*Devānām Priyeṇa Priyadarśinā rājñā biṃśati varṣābhiṣiktena*).
2. *Atana āgāca mahiyite hida budhe jāte Sākya munīti.*
(*Ātamanā āgatya mahīyitaṃ iha budhaḥ jātaḥ Śākyamuniḥ iti*).
3. *Silā bigaḍa bhicā kālāpita silā thaṃbhe usapāpīte.*
(*Śilā bikṛtabhittā kārīta śilā stambhaḥ ca utsarpitaḥ*).
4. *Hida bhagavaṃ jāteti lummini gāme ubalike kaṭe.*
(*Iha bhagavān jātaḥ iti lumbini grāmaḥ udbalikaḥ kṛtaḥ*).
5. *Aṭhabhagiye ca.*
(*Aṣṭabhāgikaḥ ca*).

The meaning is almost the same as the previous one. It has been translated as such:

«Priyadarśī, the beloved of the God, in the 20th year of his reign, came himself to worship here as Buddha, the Śākyamuni had taken his birth here. He disfigured the stone or engraved it. He erected the stone pillar. As Lord Buddha had taken birth here, he exempted the tax from this Lumbini village. Only 1/8 of total was taken as tax before».

A comparative analysis:

So far as the facts of both these inscriptions are concerned, there is no difference in the theme. Since the Tarāi region of the Himalayas and the Kapileswar (Toṣala) area geographically are situated far from each other, it is now the task of the researchers to finalise the possibility of the birth place of Buddha by carefully looking at other possible evidences.

7. Aśoka's edicts, in RADHAGOVIND BASAK, *Aśoka inscriptions*, Calcutta, 1959, pp. 123, 149-150.

As discussed earlier, there was no trace of the village Kapila, Kapilavāstu, Kapilavāthu, or Lumbinī, Luminī etc. in the Himalayan region to locate the birth place of Buddha. The Tarāi inscription was found near Nigali Sāgara of Nepal. The name Rumindei and Koṇakamana, selected as the birth place there, has no connection with Lumbini and those are fabricated and renamed as such after the inscription was found in 1896 A.D. Moreover according to the phonetical transformation of linguistic analysis 'Rumindei' can never come from the word Lumbini. It could be Lumbii, Lumbei, Lembei, Lumii and so on in the process of corruption or Apabhraṣṭa of words.

According to Indian tradition the Sanyasins after renunciation of worldly bondage usually go to the forested Himalayan region for peace. No body comes from the Himalayan region to the ganzetic crowded plane, densely populated, for practising austerities. Buddha practised his penance under the Bodhi tree at Buddha-gaya situated in the Ganzetic plane. So it is natural that he started from his residence at Kapilavāstu towards the Himalayas and on the way sat for penance under the Bodhi tree in Buddha-gayā. Therefore it is evident that Bodhi tree is on the way to north of Kapilavāstu and Kapilavāstu is situated in the south of Buddha-gayā, i.e (Bihar). This strengthens the Kapileswar plate to be authentic so far as the situation of the birth place of Buddha is concerned as it is situated in the south of Buddha-gayā. Gautam Buddha started from here, covered a lot of distance by foot towards north; reached at Bodhi tree after some months and practised penance there with a notion that the Himalayan forest has started from there.

After enlightenment Buddha came back to Kapilavāstu alone, but was not shown hospitality due to local political instability. He was treated as a common man ⁸. Buddhism was itself a reformation of Brāhminism. So Buddha chose the north India Āryāvarta to be his field for preaching his own thought against vedic sacrifice. He came to Sāranāth Mṛgadāva where he spoke to the people at large about flaws of Brāhminism and the murits of Buddhism. Here his mission became successful in attracting the people.

8. D. KOSAMBI, *Bhagavān Buddha*, Nagpur, 1940-41, p. 110.

It is found from the *Suttanipāta* of *Pavajjāsutta* of *Suttapiṭaka* that when Buddha came to Rājagṛha of Magadha, King Bimbisāra asked him whereabouts. Buddha replied to him that he belonged to Toṣala where the people are affluent with gold, riches and valour. Viz. –⁹

*Ujjuṃ Jānapado rājā hemavantassapassato.
Dhana biriyēṇa sampāno Toṣalesu nīketino.*

Some scholars wrongly interpret that Hemavanta to be Himavanta, which is not a fact. Hema means gold. So Hemavanta means the people ornamented with a lot of gold. Near Kapileśvar there is a Swarnādri or Hemādri where God Liṅgarāja Tribhuvaneśvar is worshipped at Bhuvaneśwar. History reveals that this place was known as Toṣala, a part of Trikaṭiṅga, where King Aśoka fought the Kāliṅga war and accepted Buddhism from a Buddhist monk named Upagupta.

It is found from *Lalitavistara*, 24 canto, that the first two disciples of Buddha were *tapusā* and *Bhallika*, two merehant of Utkal. They were the first people who preached Buddhism in Orissa after 540 B.C.¹⁰ the time of enlightenment of Buddha. Gradually Orissa became a very strong belt of Buddhism and it was the region completely free from Brāhmanic influence. Hence it was called in *Mahābhārata* and *Smṛtis* as “Mlecchadesha”. Aśoka before coming to Orissa was a follower of Āryadharmā, but when he came to Orissa after the conquest of Kāliṅga in 261 B.C. he saw this place was rich in Buddhism and Ahimsā. He was influenced and overwhelmed with this and accepted Buddhism. He did not get the charm of Buddhism when he was in Magadha, but enjoyed the thrill of this religion when he came to Orissa. This shows the magical charm of Buddhism in the birth

9. *Pavajjā Sutta*, 18, 19, *Suttanipāta*.

10. *Lalita Vistara*, vide *Rājāyatana Kathā*, pp. 5 and 6.

A. See *Mahabagga* of *Vinayapiṭaka*, and *Santinidāna* of *Baudha Jātaka*, Pāli publication Board, Bihar, 1906.

Tena Kho pana samayena Tapussa Bhallikā Baṇijā, Ukkalā taṃ desaṃ addhāna maggapattipannā honti.

B. In 24th canto of *Lalitavistara*: Pali publication Board, Govt. of Bihar, 1906:
Atha Kho Tapusa Bhallikā baṇijā bhagavantam etadaboca; Bhagavantam saramaṃ gacchāṃ, dhammaṃ ca.

place of Buddha prevailed upon King Ashoka and therefore he engraved two inscriptions here; one in the spot of Kalinga war in Dhauḷi (Toṣali or Toṣala) and the other in Kapilavāstu of Lumbini (Kpileśvara in Lembāi) erecting an Ashokan pillar there for the pleasure of Buddha's own people Mallas (Malliās) even now are living there migrating from Kuśinagra with the sacred ashes of Buddha, brought from there after Mahāparinirvāṇa.